

#117

6 December 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Presidential Letter of 5 December 1961 to General Norstad, with enclosed Memorandum for the President from the Secretaries of State and Defense dated 5 December 1961

1. On 3 October 1961 General Norstad was in Washington. He met the President in a meeting at 1630 hours that day, which is covered in a Memorandum of Conversation at Tab A. This meeting developed considerable discussion on NATO strategy, with all participants contributing freely, as indicated in the memorandum at Tab A.

2. After the 3 October meeting, State and Defense developed a carefully drafted document which at first was called "Preferred Sequence of Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict", but which finally acquired the title "U.S. Policy on Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict". On 20 October, 1961 the President sent General Norstad a letter which transmitted this US policy and which expanded somewhat on the rationale contained therein. The letter and enclosure are at Tab B.

3. During the last week of October, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric was engaged in visiting several European capitals and military installations in connection with the NATO military build-up. He saw General Norstad in Paris and wired the Department of Defense to request that any further action on the paper "U.S. Policy on Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict" be deferred until after a visit which General Norstad was planning to make to Washington in early November in connection with a SHAPE dinner scheduled for 6 November. On 7 November therefore General Norstad met with the President and this time the only other persons attending were Secretary McNamara and General Taylor. A Memorandum for Record covering that meeting is at Tab C. In the course of the meeting, as the memorandum at Tab C indicates, General Norstad undertook to draft and transmit to the President a paper which would be consistent with the "U.S. Policy" and at the same time prove acceptable to our NATO Allies.

4. Under date of November 16 General Norstad transmitted to the President the letter at Tab D, with its enclosure entitled "SACEUR's Instructions to SHAPE Planners". This letter with enclosure reached the White House over the weekend of 18-19 November.

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5. On 21 November Mr. Bundy sent the Secretaries of State and Defense the memorandum at Tab E which called for their joint recommendations to the President by 1 December.

6. Under date of December 1, 1961 the Secretaries transmitted to the President the memorandum at Tab F with its enclosed draft letter to General Norstad for the President's signature.

7. Over the weekend of 2-3 December, General Taylor undertook to staff the joint recommendations of the Secretaries for the consideration of the President. The following papers emerged from this process:

a. The interim version of the draft letter for the President's signature at Tab G.

b. General Taylor's memorandum for the President dated 4 December 1961 with its attached listing of major inconsistencies at Tab H.

8. On 4 December at 1600, General Taylor met alone with the President for consideration of this matter. The President decided that he would sign a brief covering letter to General Norstad including as an enclosure the text which the Secretaries of State and Defense had proposed as a letter to General Norstad for the President's signature. The version at Tab I reflects this status of the enclosure.

9. On 5 December the action on this matter entered the administrative phase of preparing appropriate documents for transmittal and circulation. At Tab K is a memorandum for Mr. Bromley Smith reflecting the administrative handling of the matter and enclosing a copy of the letter from the President along with the text forwarded by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the latter now finally modified into the form of a memorandum for the President dated 5 December.

10. At Tab L is a copy of the message as transmitted by the White House Army Signal Agency to General Norstad on 5 December.

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